

February 2, 2005

Dear Friend,

I hope the sunny blue skies of our New Mexico winter have inspired you to brave the cold and spend some time walking, hiking or skiing outside with your family and friends, enjoying the scenery and fresh air. We as New Mexicans should be proud to live in what I consider the most beautiful state in the country. As one effort to protect this beauty so future New Mexicans can enjoy the same experiences we do, I recently reintroduced the Ojito Wilderness Act.

The Ojito Wilderness Act would designate as permanent wilderness the Ojito Wilderness Study Area in Sandoval County. The Ojito area consists of about 11,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management land characterized by pristine and dramatic landforms and rock structures, and by several rare plant populations that are indigenous to the area. Beyond its scenic and natural beauty, the Ojito Wilderness Study Area and the surrounding lands are further recognized for their high density of cultural and archeological sites, including sites that have religious significance to Pueblo Indians. This legislation would also enable the Pueblo of Zia to buy land to unite the disparate pieces of their tribal lands.

I am honored on many levels to work with my New Mexico colleagues in the House of Representatives and the Senate to create the Ojito Wilderness Area. Forty years ago, while my father Stewart Udall was Secretary of the Interior, President Johnson signed into law the Wilderness Act, written to assure that some lands of the United States were left in the natural state in which humans found them. The Wilderness Act is perhaps the most poetic law ever written, defining wilderness as “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain”. The ability to experience our country's untrammelled natural beauty, and to learn and teach our children about nature on publicly owned lands, is one of the most important reasons for wilderness designations.

I am proud to do my part to help create the first new wilderness designation in New Mexico in decades. Even more so, however, I am humbled by the diligence of so many New Mexico residents who have come together and worked for years to make this a reality. The cooperation exhibited among all the stakeholders to develop a compromise that protects of all involved has been phenomenal. For more information about this legislation, please [click here](#).

Very Truly Yours,

Tom Udall
Member of Congress